

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) joined Congressional leaders today in unveiling two plaques recognizing the contributions of enslaved African Americans in the construction of the United States Capitol. One plaque will hang on each side of the Capitol on display for public viewing.

“It is, of course, the cruelest of ironies that the United States Capitol - seat of our nation’s democracy - was constructed largely by individuals who were denied their freedom,” **stated Hoyer.**

“Today we honor the often overlooked contributions of these enslaved African Americans with a permanent memorial. I am hopeful that this long overdue recognition will enable us to better understand the evolution of our democracy and our eternal commitment to the fight for equality for all people.”

Enslaved African Americans played an integral part in the building of the Capitol, working as carpenters, masons, rafters, roofers, plasterers, painters and glazers working in quarries, in addition to many other occupations. These efforts, however, went unrecognized for many years.

In 2000, Congress sought to remedy this omission by authorizing the appointment of a bicameral, bipartisan task force to study and make recommendations for appropriate recognition of this issue. Chaired by Congressman John Lewis and Vice-Chaired by Senator Blanche Lincoln, the Slave Labor Task Force included the efforts of the historian and curators of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, and representatives of the Office of the Architect of the Capitol, the Clerk, and the Capitol Visitor Center, who joined together in the creation of these plaques.

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